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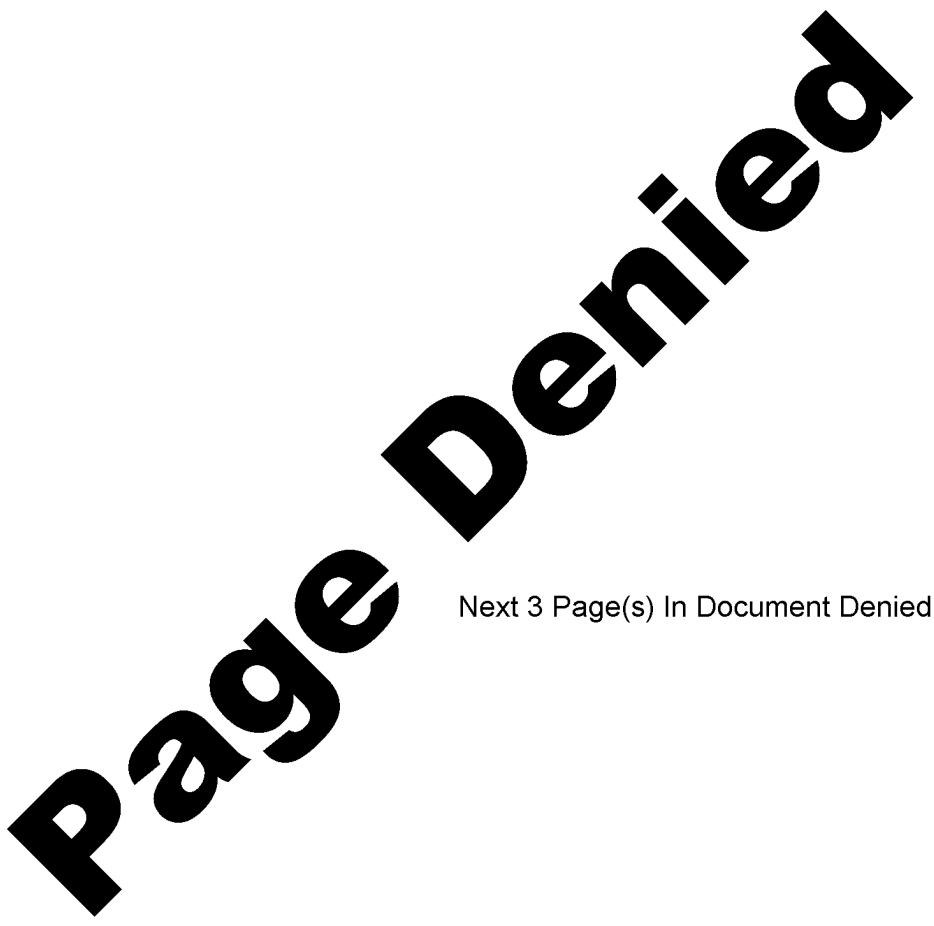

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MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Some Problems of Combat with Nuclear Missile Submarines

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Some Problems of Combat with Nuclear Missile Submarines

by Rear Admiral N. Gonchar

Combat with nuclear missile submarines is highly important and complex. Therefore, it is quite appropriate that the Journal publish articles on this theme regularly.*

The present article reviews questions concerned with defining possible patrol areas of enemy nuclear missile submarines, determining effective search methods against them, and seeking out the most expedient methods for combat with them.

Locating patrol areas of enemy nuclear missile submarines depends first of all on an analysis of the status of their navigational support and the feasible range for missile launch.

At present submarines determine their position by means of an automated navigation system with equipment which registers impulses from land navigation systems of the types "Loran-A," "Loran-C," and "Omega," and from the space navigation system, "Transit."

Until 1965 the naval command of the United States "cut up" the areas of combat patrol in accord with the distribution of the chains of the "Loran-C" radionavigation system (areas were usually chosen within the perimeters of the "stars" of these chains or near them).**

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*For example, P. Nevzorov, "Problems of Combat with the Submarine Missile Nuclear Threat, Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" No. 3 (79), 1966; A. Chabanenko, "Combat with Nuclear Submarine Missile Carriers," Military Thought No. 12, 1967

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**In the "Loran-C" system the main station is located in the center, and the base lines connecting it with the slave stations form a "star". If necessary, any of the slave stations can replace the main station (the main and slave stations form one chain in the radionavigation system). The "Loran-C" system consists of six chains: American, Norwegian, Mediterranean, Aleutian, Japanese, and Hawaiian (each with three to six stations).

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After the "Transit" system came into use in January 1965, and then the "Omega"* in 1967, the choice of these areas no longer depended on the location of the "Loran-C" chains, since submarines could then determine their coordinates with great accuracy at any point on the World Ocean.

In answering the question of the location of areas where enemy missile submarines may patrol, their range of fire has become the decisive factor, and all other criteria, such as our areas of intensive antisubmarine defense, the busiest world shipping lanes, shallow areas, navigational hazards, and others, have lost their former significance.

At present we consider that there are four areas patrolled by missile submarines of the United States:**

- the northeast Atlantic (south of Iceland and west of the Hebrides);
- the northwest and central part of the Norwegian Sea;
- the western part of the Pacific Ocean (southeast of the Japanese Islands);
- the Mediterranean Sea.

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We must not consider, however, that these are the only areas from which submarines may launch missiles against targets in the Soviet Union and the countries of the Socialist commonwealth.

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*"Omega" is the newest United States navigation system, consisting of one chain with eight stations; it is used for communications with submerged submarines and for transmitting international time and frequency data to them.

**Our information on the presence in these areas of American missile submarines consists of fragmentary data received at different intervals and, therefore, is not always reliable.

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Contacts received from an unidentified underwater target may be valid as well as false, since the probable enemy no doubt engages in essential deception. Also, the areas of submarine patrol which are considered known in peacetime may not coincide with the areas of combat patrol in a prewar period or in wartime. Therefore, in addition to checking areas in which unidentified underwater targets have been detected and areas in which there is much repetition of coordinates by the various radionavigational systems as submarines determine their positions, we must proceed with the development and completion of zonal defenses against missiles fired by missile submarines.

The possible areas of the World Ocean from which the most vital targets can be hit may be indicated in advance and monitored as much as possible during peacetime. In areas from which the most critical installations in the Soviet Union can be hit, it is advisable to establish peacetime combat service by the antisubmarine forces of those fleets in whose zones of responsibility the areas lie.

If, during a prewar period or in wartime, we have intelligence on enemy preparations for mounting a submarine strike against a given target, we can establish the time limit within which those fleets of the Soviet Union which have the responsibility for these areas will simultaneously begin search operations against enemy submarines. Appropriate formations of troops of Antiair Defense and Antimissile Defense of the Country will be targeted to destroy the missiles within the prescribed time limits and from whatever directions they are launched.

The determination of more effective methods for search operations against missile submarines largely depends on the correctness with which we answer the question: Can an enemy submarine launch missiles from any point in its combat patrol area, or must it have a special launch area to which it must proceed upon receipt of the order to deliver a strike?

Our literature on this subject contains two conflicting viewpoints.

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One holds that the combat patrol areas may reach 200,000 square nautical miles (450 x 450 nautical miles, or 835 x 835 kilometers), and that the submarines on patrol within them are prepared for a missile launch on fifteen minutes notice.

The other view holds that submarines can launch missiles only from special launch positions located outside the combat patrol areas. Different sources give different estimates for the distance between the combat patrol areas and the launch position areas (these estimates fluctuate between 148 and 370 kilometers, while the dimensions of the launch positions are given as 37 x 37 kilometers).

The contradiction in these views lies in the fact that if submarines on patrol are prepared to launch missiles at fifteen minutes notice, then they cannot go farther away from their launch point than the distance they could cover in fifteen minutes at top speed (i.e., they cannot go more than 5.5 miles away from their launch point). If we assume that the launch point is in the center of the combat patrol area, then this area must not exceed 20 x 20 kilometers. On the other hand, in war games and exercises, the minimum dimensions of combat patrol areas are taken as equal to 180 x 270 kilometers.

Given these dimensions for combat patrol areas, American submarines cannot use their fifteen minute launch capability (particularly if the combat patrol areas and the launch positions are 148 to 370 kilometers apart; a submarine would require 3.5 to 9 hours just to cover this distance).

Thus, the necessity for submarines to occupy special launch positions actually makes it impossible for them to use their fifteen minute launch capability. We note that our analysis of these viewpoints has not touched upon the technical capabilities of submarines which would confirm or refute the necessity for them to occupy special launch positions.

Let us briefly examine whether it is necessary for missile submarines to launch missiles from special launch areas.

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First of all, we would like to point out that there are four factors which may cause any ballistic missile, including the "Polaris", to miss its target: the extent of its own (technical) dispersion; errors in the coordinates of the target; errors in the coordinates of the submarine's location at the moment of launch; and errors in fixing the axis of the true meridian.

The first two errors (dispersion and incorrect target coordinates) do not depend on the crew complement and will therefore not be considered here. An error in the coordinates of the submarine's location at the moment a missile is launched is incorporated to its full extent into missile deviation from the target, regardless of the range. To determine the coordinates of their location, submarines have the following equipment on board: numerous radionavigational systems and autonomous means for determining locations from celestial bodies or from solar and lunar radio emissions; the astronavigational periscope "STRADAC"; the radio sextant AN/SRN-5; and the inertial navigation system "SINS"* which maintains a fix on the coordinates of a submarine's location in mid-latitudes for ten hours with an accuracy of 0.4 to 0.6 kilometers. Consequently, a submarine does not require a special launch area in order to determine the coordinates of its location and insert them into the missiles, since the methods enumerated above allow this to be done at any point on the World Ocean.

Let us proceed to the fourth reason which may cause a missile to miss its target: the magnitude of error in the axis of the true meridian at the moment missiles are launched.

Despite all the positive qualities of the United States radionavigation systems, not one of them can determine the axis of the true meridian. Thus, if an American missile submarine can determine its location without surfacing, it must still ascend to periscope depth in order to determine the axis of the

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*The inertial navigation system "SINS" has devices which automatically register and integrate increases in speed. Inertial systems of navigation differ from other navigation systems in that they can operate for an extended period without an external source of navigation information.

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true meridian. It is then obliged to raise the "STRADAC" astronavigational periscope (if the weather is clear) or the antenna of the AN/SRN-5 radio sextant, which has a diameter of 120 centimeters. These devices make it possible to determine* the axis of the true meridian with an accuracy of approximately 0.16 to 0.19 and 1.10 to 1.15. It does not matter where a missile submarine is located on the ocean when it makes observations of celestial bodies or of solar or lunar radio emissions. To accomplish this, it is important to have large-sized equipment extending above the surface. It is therefore vital that the area be free of foreign naval vessels, commercial shipping, and aircraft. A submarine accordingly determines the plane of its true meridian far from commercial shipping lanes and fishing areas and out of sight of land. Thus, a special launch area is also unnecessary for determining the axis of the true meridian. It should be added that in addition to the "SINS", the automated navigation equipment of submarines includes the general-purpose digital computer "NAVDAC", into which data are fed from the navigation equipment, and into which inputs are made from punch cards containing the geographical coordinates of the target and the types of burst of the nuclear warhead (program of fire).**

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*Specialists of the American firm Autonetics, which develops inertial navigation systems for missile submarines, have made calculations for gyroscopes with a drift of 0.001 degrees per hour at a firing distance of 4600 kilometers, with an error of 185 meters in determining the submarine's location. These calculations, which took into account the latitude of location and the axis of the firing plane, showed that submarines armed with Polaris A-3 missiles must determine the axis of their true meridian every fifteen minutes in areas with latitudes of 54 to 70 degrees, or every eight hours if the latitude of the patrol area is more than 70 degrees. (The Autonetics calculations are confirmed by the author's computations, which are not included in this article. - Editor's note.)

**Some of our specialists consider that the existence of these punch cards means that in order to launch missiles a submarine must proceed to a specific point indicated by the punch card. However, the use of punch cards does not mean that the submarine must proceed to a special launch point. Punch cards are necessary to prevent accidental errors through manual input of target data and to prevent the personnel (including the commander) from knowing the targets of the missiles or the type of burst to be used.

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We have thus come to the conclusion that American submarines do not require special launch positions and that they can launch missiles from any point in their combat patrol area within fifteen minutes of receiving the order.*

It is appropriate to state in passing that the formerly held viewpoint concerning special launch positions may possibly be explained by the fact that the first nuclear/missile submarines, of the GEORGE WASHINGTON class, did not have inertial navigation systems (the prelaunch preparation period aboard these ships was about four hours, spent mainly in preventing any acceleration in onboard missile instruments; therefore, the submarines proceeded for not less than four hours on a steady course and at a steady speed and constant depth, as though it were leaving the patrol area for the area of launch positions.

The question of whether the latest United States missile submarines require special launch areas is very important. And this is why considerable attention has been devoted in our literature to search methods against missile submarines. These methods usually proceed from the assumption that the person organizing the search must know the direction in which the missile submarine is proceeding.

It is advisable to organize a search with due consideration for the general direction in which it is assumed the submarine is proceeding. In areas of combat patrol, attention should be concentrated on intercepting the submarines by tracking them as they proceed from the patrol areas to the launch position areas.

If launch position areas do not actually exist, however, then such an approach to search operations is fundamentally invalid.

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*A fifteen-minute prelaunch preparation period is needed by submarines in order to carry out, with the aid of the special system "ACRE", an automatic remote-control check of the entire equipment complex of the missile: warhead, the firing system of motors, and other missile elements.

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Consequently a search must include the entire assumed area of combat patrol, since there is equal likelihood that the submarine will appear at any point in this area. Search methods must correspond to this requirement.

A second urgent reason for clarifying this question is connected with the degree to which it is important to conceal the activities of antisubmarine forces during a search.

If, to launch missiles, a submarine must proceed to a specific point or area, whose coordinates are known, concealment does not play a leading role in the search. In this case it is important to know at least the approximate location of the launch area. However, if the missile submarine can launch missiles from any point of a vast combat patrol area, concealment becomes highly significant in the activities of antisubmarine forces. This conclusion is indicated by the fact that modern submarines have great capabilities for the early detection of antisubmarine forces. In this regard, nuclear propulsion, the existence of various ways of jamming the detection equipment of antisubmarine forces, and the wide choice of firing ranges all enable a submarine to take evasive action if it knows it is the object of a search.

The regular and unavoidable need for submarines to rise near the surface in order to determine the axis of their true meridian requires that search operations be organized not only for underwater targets but also for surface targets which are small, have a low-contrast radar profile, and can disappear quickly.

This may best be done by reconnaissance ships with the external appearance of fishing vessels, equipped with radar and hydroacoustical sets. Such ships, deployed in an assumed missile submarine combat patrol area, can establish the regularity with which submarines approach the surface to determine their meridian axis and can also provide information for directing our antisubmarine forces against them. 50X1-HUM

The perfection of reliable communications methods among antisubmarine forces, particularly with antisubmarine submarines, is an important task in combat with enemy missile submarines. The effectiveness of search operations against missile submarines by our antisubmarine forces, including our antisubmarine submarines, depends to a great extent on the hydrological conditions in the search area.

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The type of hydrological conditions depends mainly on the time of year. Each type of hydrological condition bears a marked seasonal character. On all oceans and seas there is a sharp worsening of search conditions in spring and summer (especially summer) and an improvement in fall and winter (especially winter). However, analysis of all types of hydrological vertical sections shows that, regardless of conditions, antisubmarine submarines must carry on search for the enemy at great depths (130 to 240 meters).

This assures detection of enemy submarines at the greatest distances and preserves the security of our search operations, and for nuclear antisubmarine submarines it also allows greater search speeds.*

Search operations at great depths also have a negative side, however, mainly operational in character. The fact is that at these depths it is impossible to transmit radio signals, even at super long wavelengths, to antisubmarine submarines. They are obliged to approach the surface at set times in order to communicate from depths at which super long wave radio transmissions are certain to be received; and they must rise to periscope depths in areas which are unfavorable for receiving super long wavelengths.

Experience shows that it is highly undesirable to assign antisubmarine submarines a communications schedule calling for contact more often than every twelve hours. At the same time, with deterioration in the international situation, the demand for the timely transmission of a radio signal at the outbreak of war requires that the communications schedule call for two-hour, one-hour, or even continuous contact. Surfacing from great depths for communications in an area of intensive enemy antisubmarine defense necessitates stopping at various depths in order to monitor the surrounding waters and determine the causes of any sources of noise detected on the surface or underwater so

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*The main source of noise from a submarine is its screw propeller. At a given speed, the deeper an antisubmarine submarine conducts a search the less noise will be produced by its screw propeller.

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that timely evasive action can be taken. As a result, approaching the surface (and subsequent return to the optimal search depth) can take a considerable length of time.

If antisubmarine submarines are assigned frequent communications contacts, they will not have enough time left for effective search operations. For communications with submarines, it is therefore advisable to use not only radio but also special sound signals created through the explosion of charges in an underwater sound channel.* For this purpose we suggest having a relay submarine in the area of the ocean (sea) in which a search is being conducted by antisubmarine submarines. It must be located in the search area at a depth at which it is certain of receiving transmissions from super-long-wave radio stations; or at periscope depth if conditions are unfavorable for the reception of these wavelengths under water. Upon receiving a signal for transmission to antisubmarine submarines, a relay submarine submerges to the depth of the floor of an underwater sound channel and there produces a combination of explosions in accordance with a specific previously established signal.

So that these explosions do not harm the relay submarine, it can fire the charges at a depth less than the depth of the floor of the underwater sound channel, at a safe radius from the explosion. If the charges are equipped with time fuzes constructed on the hydrostatic principle,** then the fuze must be set to explode at a depth equal to the depth of the floor of the underwater sound channel. The charges will begin to sink when they leave the appropriate device of the relay submarine and will explode upon reaching the floor of the underwater sound channel.

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*When a source of sound is located underwater at a depth corresponding to the minimum speed of sound, the emanations from the source at various angles to the horizontal (at specific levels higher and lower than the level of the source) undergo full internal reverberation and are propagated as though there were fully reverberating walls in the channel. Within this channel, called a sound channel, very long-range propagation of sound is observed, reaching several thousand kilometers.

**As is done with depth bombs used by surface ships.

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The charges do not need to be large, and thus the safe radius of their explosion will also be small. In experiments in the Atlantic Ocean, the detonation of bombs weighing 1.8 and 2.7 kilograms on the axis of an underwater sound channel could be heard well at distances of 4250 and 5750 kilometers respectively. In experiments in the Black Sea in 1955, the explosion of a 200-gram charge off the coast of the Caucasus was registered easily on the Bulgarian coast.

Seeking out methods for combat with enemy nuclear missile submarines in order to break up nuclear-missile strikes at the beginning of a war is, as already noted, an urgent problem.

According to existing concepts, our Navy can carry out an independent operation to destroy groupings of enemy naval forces; the fundamental tasks of the operation are: the destruction of nuclear submarines; the defeat of carrier strike large units; and the destruction of groupings of ships at bases and shipyards.

It is anticipated that these tasks will be carried out during one fleet operation, or in individual operations in fulfilling each of these tasks.

There is also another point of view which holds that combat with missile submarines cannot be carried out within the framework of an operation, particularly at the beginning of a war, since search operations against nuclear submarines will begin while we are still at peace and combat will develop with them from the moment war begins, ending only after the last enemy submarine in the theater is destroyed or the war comes to an end. Thus, combat with enemy missile submarines will take place only as part of the regular actions of fleet forces.

In our opinion it is impossible to concur fully in either of these viewpoints.

The military leadership of the United States considers that a general nuclear attack must begin with strikes against targets in the countries of the Socialist commonwealth, using Minuteman, Titan, and Polaris missiles.

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Considering the fifteen-minute readiness of patrolling submarines to launch missiles and the rapid-fire capability which enables them to launch all of their sixteen missiles within fifteen minutes, we can assume that the participation of these submarines in an initial nuclear strike will end thirty minutes after the strike begins, or, in the absence of a non-nuclear period, thirty minutes after the beginning of the war. Since it is urgently necessary to find and destroy missile submarines before they can launch all of their missiles, in a case where war is nuclear from the beginning, our antisubmarine forces will have about fifteen minutes in which to carry out this mission.

According to an existing theory, any operation is planned in line with the following missions: the main mission (its formulation most often coincides with the naming of the operation); the assurance of our capability to deploy forces; and the advance neutralization (destruction) of enemy forces and means hindering the conduct of our operation. There may be further missions, but these are the mandatory ones. If only one mission is fulfilled, it is not an operation but merely the conduct of combat actions within the daily operational activity of the fleet.

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We must add to the above that, regarding the theory of the conduct of operations, the concept "operation" can apply only to wartime, for "operations" are not carried out in peacetime.

If this opinion is accepted, then we cannot carry out operations to destroy enemy missile submarines in a war that has a nuclear beginning. It is impossible to fulfil the designated missions within the fifteen minutes which would be available for our antisubmarine forces. The main mission can be fulfilled only partially: to destroy the missile submarines already located and tracked during peacetime. It is impossible to begin organizing a search after the outbreak of war and expect to succeed in finding even one enemy submarine in their vast combat patrol area in fifteen minutes.

Because of the conditions of combat with enemy missile submarines, since the beginning of 1964 our Navy has performed continuous combat service in the assumed areas of combat patrol

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of enemy submarines. Our antisubmarine forces are ready to use conventional or nuclear weapons immediately upon receipt of a signal indicating that war has begun and its variant--whether it is nuclear or non-nuclear.

Under present conditions, the antisubmarine forces of our Navy may be in the following situations: combat service; combat duty forces; out of service for restoration of combat readiness following combat service or service with combat duty forces; preparing for entrance into combat service or service with combat duty forces; in reserve (for extensive repairs, working on training problems after repair or routine demobilization of personnel); or enroute to areas of combat service or returning from them.

An antisubmarine submarine (or surface ship) will be in one of these six situations in the source of a full cycle, and none of them may be excluded.

Who will fulfil the mission of disrupting the participation of enemy missile submarines in an initial nuclear strike if war begins suddenly? It is perfectly obvious that this will be done by the antisubmarine forces in combat service, which constitute a small part of the available antisubmarine forces.

Is it possible to reinforce these forces? Assuming that the war begins suddenly, with a non-nuclear period of short duration, the forces in combat service can be reinforced only by aircraft.* However, if there is a brief threatening period, then, besides air reinforcements, they may be reinforced with nuclear antisubmarine submarines from the combat duty forces.

Thus, considering the different ways in which war may begin, it is most probable that the disruption of the initial nuclear strike of enemy missile submarines will be carried out mainly by the combat duty forces.

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*With the present operational radii of our antisubmarine aircraft, their use in strengthening antisubmarine forces is not likely in areas of combat patrol by missile submarines deployed in the oceans.

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Is it proper to consider that these forces will begin an operation, or will begin to carry out one of the main missions of an operation to destroy groupings of enemy naval forces, only upon the outbreak of war? We believe not. It is evident that to successfully carry out this mission we must organize combat service and submarine search while we are still at peace.

In this connection it is important to clarify the question: What is the basis for the combat service planning which is drawn up in the fleets?

In our opinion, the plan for combat service must devolve from the plan for initial operations.

The quantity of antisubmarine forces simultaneously engaged in search operations during peacetime must be such that if war begins suddenly, they can ensure the disruption of the initial nuclear strike of enemy missile submarines, with a probability provided for in the plan for initial operations.

Therefore, the determination of search areas for missile submarines must also devolve from the plan for initial operations, which in turn must be kept current through information received from the combat service and the various types of reconnaissance. But if combat service devolves from the plan for initial operations and fulfils the missions projected for it, then it cannot be carried on outside the operational framework, even though it exists during peacetime.

It is important to settle one other question: Will the fleet, from the beginning of combat actions, carry out an independent operation to destroy enemy missile submarines, or will this mission be fulfilled within the framework of an operation to destroy groupings of enemy naval forces? We consider that, upon the outbreak of combat actions, the destruction of missile submarines will be one of the three main missions of an operation to destroy groupings of enemy naval forces,* which in turn is an

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*The basic missions of such an operation are: the destruction of missile submarines; the defeat of carrier strike large units; and the destruction of groupings of ships at bases (shipyards).

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integral part of initial operations. During the war, the destruction of enemy missile submarines may take place within the framework of an independent operation.

Why is it important that the destruction of enemy missile submarines at the beginning of the war be carried out within the framework of an operation to destroy groupings of enemy naval forces, and not within the framework of an independent operation?

Because if a nuclear war breaks out in the most probable way (by a surprise attack at the outset) not only will the destruction of missile submarines be carried out mainly by forces of the combat service, but so will the defeat of carrier strike large units and the destruction of groupings of enemy ships at bases and shipyards.

If there is a threatening period, even a short one, or the war begins without the use of means of mass destruction, or if both apply, the fleet and the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command must resolve the problem of neutralizing enemy forces and means hindering the conduct of our operation.

In this case, the neutralization of these forces and means--antiair defense, strike aviation, antisubmarine lines, groupings of surface ships, communications centers, observation means, etc.--will have a positive effect on the fulfilment of all three of the main missions of an operation to destroy groupings of enemy naval forces.

To assist in combat with enemy missile submarines, our Navy conducts so-called search operations on a regular schedule.

In addition to the established schedule, search operations can also be conducted if the international situation deteriorates. These operations represent search actions coordinated according to target, location and time, and, also, actions in tracking enemy submarines detected by various types of antisubmarine forces; and they are conducted in ocean and sea theaters in peacetime in accordance with a single concept and plan.

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As a rule, search operations are conducted not in the assumed patrol areas of enemy missile submarines but in those areas in which unidentified underwater targets were last observed.

During search operations antisubmarine forces in these areas are massed by redeploying combat service forces and deploying additional ships and aircraft from the combat composition of a fleet.

Thus, summarizing what has been stated above, we arrive at the following conclusions:

1. Given the present status and development perspectives of enemy missile submarines and of their means of support, it is advisable to adopt a zonal defense of our country against strikes by missile submarines.

2. The missile submarines of our probable enemy do not have special launch positions. Missiles may be launched from any point in the combat patrol area if the area is located within the range of the missiles; the fifteen-minute readiness period for these submarines to launch missiles is counted from the moment the strike order is received and not from the moment of arrival in the launch area.

3. In order to ensure preemptive strikes by our antisubmarine submarines against enemy missile submarines, we must have a reliable means of sending them a signal at the outbreak of war, regardless of the depth at which they may be located at the time. For this purpose it is advisable to have relay submarines in search areas to transmit this signal to antisubmarine submarines through explosive charges in a specified combination in the area of the axis of an underwater sound channel.

4. The destruction of enemy missile submarines at the beginning of a war must be accomplished within the framework of a fleet operation to destroy groupings of enemy fleet forces. We anticipate the fulfilment of the following specific missions during this operation: the maintenance of combat service during peacetime and carrying out of search operations on a regular schedule; the destruction of detected missile submarines after the

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outbreak of hostilities and the continuing search for them; and the search for, tracking, and destruction of missile submarines which have already fired their missiles.

5. An operation conducted at the outbreak of hostilities in order to destroy groupings of enemy fleet forces must be an integral part of initial naval operations.

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